

# The Holocaust and Wikipedia's Portrayal of the Polish-Jewish Relations

Review of: Jan Grabowski & Shira Klein (2023), "Wikipedia's Intentional Distortion of the History of the Holocaust" [in] *The Journal of Holocaust Research* [online], DOI: 10.1080/25785648.2023.2168939

by Richard Tylman, MFA

## Abstract

The goal for this paper is to take stock of the challenges facing Wikipedia's portrayal of the Polish–Jewish relations, in conjunction with the launch of a 59-page manifesto by Professor of History at the University of Ottawa, Jan Grabowski, a Polish-born Canadian, like the reviewer below. In the so-called age of *post-truth*, one's own version of reality is often amplified and accelerated to the point of disregard for reliable ways of knowing what is true. With the aim of controlling the spread of misinformation, Grabowski & Klein offer a scathing critique of the lack of criticality within Wikipedia. The complaints against volunteer contributors "promoting a skewed version of history" emerge as the new paradigm for evaluating the viability of the project. Grabowski & Klein use a narrative device commonly referred to as dog whistling to tell us what to think and advise us whom to condemn. Thus Wikipedia's collective ability to assimilate factual information is questioned. The Polish *raison d'être* is linked with incorrigible prejudice. The Foundation is urged to identify state-sponsored agents who might have entered the scene, and behaved to look into the arbitration's inability to deal with the issue. The opinions presented by Grabowski & Klein as facts, more often than not, contain both evidence of bias and distorted reality judgments. Named Wikipedians are targeted for degradation, others are glorified. At least some evidence seems manufactured.

**Keywords:** Wikipedia, Poland, Holocaust, Pogroms, Collaboration

## An introduction to the problem

The advent of Wikipedia was a milestone in the development of networked science. Volunteers from all walks of life have come together to participate in a brand new content creation strategy. Genuine system of compromise became necessary in mediating competing interests. A breath of fresh air ... or, so it seemed, in the traditional echo

chambers seeding familiar narratives already known to a target audience. The emergence of Wikipedia challenged the hegemony of cognitive bias. The epistemic bubble in sociopolitical judgments, ‘burst.’ Feeling cornered by the perspectives of others, angry users resorted to hardball tactics: socking, gaslighting, rumor-mongering, deceptive hints, doxxing and derogatory name calling meant to ruin real-life reputations. In the most important controversial debate topics of our times, high intensity emotions took over with allegations of scientific fraud and moral misconduct flying thick and fast.

Wikipedia responded by developing tools and mechanisms to help facilitate dialogue within a broader context of cultural and linguistic diversity. The process was gradual. Guidelines took years or even decades to negotiate. Objective criteria and standards emerged in regard to verifiable sources of information to counter editors’ bias. A quick glance at the kind of intellectual violence perpetrated in Wikipedia 15 years earlier is startling. See below for an example of a 2008 post by an unmistakable source employed by Grabowski & Klein, calling contributions of his counterparts “rants” — “venomous”, “flagrant”, “antisemitic”, “uncivil” — twenty two times in a single block of so-called *evidence*, line after line, after line, without any negative repercussions. Wikimedia Foundation would be well advised to look into the identity of that user in conjunction with the litany of minute grievances by his doppelgänger who renders Grabowski & Klein impossible to follow.

History of the Holocaust has been weaponized with affective intensity hardly before seen. Shocking practice of cheapening the memory of the victims emerged, not only among prominent public figures, but also among some academics plumbing disturbingly new depths to advance their own agendas. First, it was the bankruptcy of moral obligations toward the community, to which they feel they belong (see nearly total absence of Kresy in

*Dalej jest noc*).<sup>1</sup> Now, it is the end of all rational dialogue. Offensive comparisons – take your pick – are used to demonize and intimidate critics from different backgrounds and their followers alike. Welcome to the 2020s where everyone must take sides.

Grabowski & Klein smear not only history buffs who participate in content creation, but also historians and their history books, to foster an illusion of threat. This threat was first spelled out in Professor Grabowski's 2020 op-ed in the Polish language, as Wikipedia's quote unquote a major threat to democracy. The article in *Wyborcza* became the framework on which his 2023 paper with Shira Klein was built ... It is obvious once the newspaper article in Polish is fed to Google Translate, and then displayed side by side with his English paper. The Polish original was reused as a lead-in to a 'new' work with some touch-ups and dox dropping. In the eliminationist rhetoric of Grabowski & Klein, derogatory labels are hurled at Wikipedians who are university graduates and liberal professors on different continents; the utterance 'distortionist' is repeated 34 times, 'nationalist' 40 times, 'antisemitic' 69 times, resembling ritualized incantations. Repetitive spouting of ambiguous phrases serves another function; it invites readers to view Grabowski & Klein as daring, even though what follows is often offensive and insulting.

The advocacy espoused by Professor Grabowski is meant to foster an aura of menace, which is also known as connotational coloring.<sup>2</sup> However, his claims of Wikipedia's inability to combat antisemitism are empirically false. In the open source content

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<sup>1</sup> Tomasz Domański, "[Korekta obrazu](#)" [Image correction, 2019]. Review of *Dalej jest noc* ed. by Grabowski & Engelking and published by IPN in *Polish-Jewish Studies*. The punctilious accounts of Jewish persecution in areas annexed by Nazi Germany excluded over half of the territory of prewar Poland occupied by the USSR in 1939–1941 and inhabited by 13.2 million people (Poles, Polish Ukrainians, Jews and Polish Belorussians). During 21 months of terror 1.25 million citizens of the Second Republic were incarcerated, shot and/or deported to Siberia; 30 percent of them, Jews (Gross, p. 27). Anna Zapalec mentioned The Archives of the Hoover Institution, but not for what they revealed about the NKVD roundups. Further reading: Sword & Iglicka, 1996, *Deportation and Exile: Poles in the Soviet Union 1939-48*, ISBN 0312123973, pp. 18, 26, 232.

<sup>2</sup> Jason Fuqua, "Semantic Prosody", *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning* ([pdf download](#)). Connotational coloring on a lexico-grammatical level addresses the tendency among non-native English speakers to place words and phrases in a certain semantic environment.

management system there are many eyes and ears watching for, identifying, and alerting on possible breaches of conduct set out in policy. The phenomenon is somewhat similar to the ‘Linus’s Law’ in open source movement, whereas the more popular projects in operation have a better chance of having the need for improvement characterized quickly: ‘Somebody finds the problem, and somebody else understands it’ (this is called the *bazaar* style of project development). The outcome variable relies on other variables.

As far as content *dissemination* via Wikipedia, the emphasis is on active learning that goes beyond passive acquisition of knowledge advocated by Grabowski (*Wyborcza*). For example, a student immersed in a collaborative environment of Wikipedia could emerge writing like a college graduate within a year. No matter how shallow her knowledge, there could be sufficient ingrained content in her aggressive editing across multiple articles to fool many of us (see below for some of the more egregious examples of prejudice and dilettantism shown by Grabowski’s lionized key sources in disguise).

“Falsely accusing someone of anti-Semitism is just as dangerous as not calling out anti-Semitism when, in fact, it is present...” wrote Rabbi Hershel D. Lutch. In Grabowski & Klein, the first Wikipedian singled out for an *ad hominem* attack, with no supporting note reference (or *any* confirmatory evidence), was the former editor named Poeticbent (p. 17 in pdf). The actual wording is as follows: “*The charge of Żydokomuna, that Jews were in the majority communist or conspired with the communists to hurt Poles, occurs frequently on Wikipedia. One vivid example of this form of antisemitism was made by an editor called Poeticbent.*” These allegations are false and beyond absurd. Poeticbent, identified (in the same paragraph) by real life name,<sup>3</sup> location, and personal interests (why?), didn’t contribute much of anything to the writing of *Żydokomuna* in Wikipedia.

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<sup>3</sup> Jan Grabowski and Shira Klein, “Wikipedia’s Intentional Distortion of the History of the Holocaust.” JHR, 2023 ([open access](#)), p. 6 in pdf. See also, reaction of the renowned American historian Richard C. Lukas to the above paper, in “[Is it History or Propaganda?](#)” published by the *Polish American Journal*, May 2023.

Before departing in 2018, user Poeticbent provided three minor fixes to *Żydokomuna* entry since 2008: once in 2013 with the summary *→removed part of an IP edit which was not in the source*; and twice in 2016 with the summary *→fixed reference error raised by ReferenceBot and hot-linked Joanna B. Michlic*. In 2008 (16 years ago today), Poeticbent made quality improvements to the article in question by adding citations from renowned Holocaust historians Robert Blobaum, Dariusz Libionka, Daniel Blatman, as well as Yad Vashem Studies in relevant paragraphs.<sup>4</sup>

For more examples of Grabowski & Klein shadow-boxing imaginary demons, see below. In criminal law, this form of victimization is known as a frame-up, the act of framing someone by providing false evidence and false testimony with the intent to deceive. It is very unlikely that the authors would have had any reason to lie about me, if it wasn't for the morally bankrupt and criminally minded anonymous source they relied on in their exhortation unremittingly.<sup>5</sup> It was the same Israeli editor (see Benjakob, 2019),<sup>6</sup> who got me T-banned for protesting against his grotesque removal of data from Wikipedia entries about the Polish Righteous.

Poeticbent did not contribute anything hostile to, or prejudiced against Jewish people, beyond some embarrassing moments in history. I wrote extensively about the Righteous with no illusions about the other parts of Polish society either. Why would they be any different from the rest of the planet, when faced with the threat of persecution or worse?

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<sup>4</sup> “Żydokomuna” entry in English Wikipedia, revision history [statistics](#). One of the top editors to “Żydokomuna” (by the number of edits and the amount of text added) was Grabowski & Klein’s own associate switching between multiple accounts.

<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia’s penchant for intellectual violence at the administrative level is best exemplified by the so-called [boomeranging](#) of Poeticbent at WP:AE framed in 2018 by Grabowski’s primary supplier of data, in reprisal for protesting against the removal of the Holocaust rescue efforts.

<sup>6</sup> As far as evidence of quasi-criminal activities of a named entity within and without Wikipedia, see the “Main response to Grabowski and Klein” by senior editor Volunteer Marek in his 2023 [“Most important part first.”](#) Substack series.

But there were also good people among the ethnic majority in occupied Poland,<sup>7</sup> displaying exceptional courage, and saving lives in the process. As an essayist, I have always been interested in the critical–thinking approach to ethical questions, and beyond doubt, that is the real reason for the *ad hominem* attack on me, which Professor Grabowski chose to make on his own.<sup>8</sup> As far as unintentional errors I might have repeated from online publications, making them is only human, as the 2021 court case acquittal of Grabowski & Engelking has also proven. See, section below about a placard in Yiddish published by SSP, and reprinted by IPN among other outlets.<sup>9</sup>

## How prejudice makes a lie

There's a troubling tendency in the world's largest and volunteer–run encyclopedia to try to defame academics specializing in the history of the Polish nation. Most amateur contributors who wish to malign Poland out of intellectual arrogance, lack the experience of the Polish language, society, and culture. Without exposure to Poland's complex identity and no knowledge of relevant scholarship, drive-by editors who are biased and uninformed, fall back on their own prior familiarity with political dogma,<sup>10</sup> some of it

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<sup>7</sup> Piotr Zychowicz, Interview with Prof. Richard Lukas: “*Holokaust Polaków – rozmowa*” [The Polish People’ Holocaust – A conversation] concerning (among other things) the media attacks on his *God’s Playground: A History of Poland*. Reprint from *Bibula – pismo niezależne*, Baltimore, MD, quote in translation: “I won’t talk about the abounding number of Poles who helped Jews, because these matters are well known in Poland. Suffice it to say that there were much, much more of them than Poles who harmed Jews.” [Wayback](#).

<sup>8</sup> Poeticbent disclosed his real identity on his user page in Wikipedia well over a decade ago. There was no ‘secret’ to unravel. See, Grabowski’s claim in Polish, attributed to Benjakob, in “Wrzuć brednię na Wikipedię [Post your bilge on Wikipedia],” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Feb. 28, 2020 ([paywall](#)). Quote in translation: “People who edit entries in Wikipedia remain anonymous, hiding under pseudonyms – as Omer Benjakob wrote – e.g. Volunteer Marek, Poeticbent or Piotrus.” ([Wayback](#)). Benjakob didn’t say that. He hurled insults at Wikipedia contributors by name.

<sup>9</sup> As far as ArbCom ‘evidence’ fabricated by G&K’s *trusted* anonymous provider of data identified only by one of his many dozens of Wikipedia aliases – and other made up stories, about the alleged Polish nationalism – see the 2019 final ruling at “Arbitration Requests Case Antisemitism in Poland” resulting in his [topic ban](#) from the Holocaust in Poland.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Blatman, Feb. 22, 2019, [Opinion](#) in *Haaretz*, about the Polish–Israeli diplomatic row over the Holocaust. *Further reading*, Klara Jackl and Mateusz Szczepaniak, “Polish Righteous.” *POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews*, Warsaw, 2023 ([online](#)). “The difficulty in

harking back to the cold war era.<sup>11</sup> This phenomenon is endemic to every Poland–related category in English Wikipedia. For example, Wikipedia promotes the Russian rather than the Polish perspective on war crimes committed in the territory of the Second Republic. Information of paramount significance regarding Operation Barbarossa is being intentionally revised to obscure the fact that the attack was launched from occupied Poland. In the Second Republic there was no Bolshevism. Poland stopped the Red Army in 1920. Beginning in June 1941 wrote Fleming, “Germany invaded Soviet–occupied and Soviet territory” in a consecutive manner.

The Wikipedia trend of promoting the Nazi German miscalculated attack of 22 June 1941 as the actual invasion of the USSR – right in the middle of occupied Poland split between both aggressors – can be as dangerous as prejudice. The examples of similar pro-Russian POVs, while still conforming to the reliable source requirement, are boundless. In 2018 an editor praised in Grabowski & Klein, revised the Polish Białystok to read that the city was annexed by Germany from the Soviet Union. Białystok was never in the Soviet Union.

The same interviewee in their 2019 edit to the ‘Final Solution’ renamed the attack on the Red Army positions in eastern Poland again, as the invasion of the Soviet Union (Soviet Union was 230 km, 143 miles to the east). In their 2019 edit to ‘Einsatzkommando’, the German attack on the Soviet positions in eastern Poland was changed yet again into an attack on the USSR with the claim of an →*ahistorical language* thus reflecting the old Moscow policy of territorial *fait accompli*. The process was repeated in the same editing timeline, for the prewar voivodeship of Poland, in a broader scheme to equate the Second Republic ideologically with Nazi Germany.

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discovering and verifying the accounts of help provided to Jews was also affected by breaking off diplomatic relations between the People’s Republic of Poland and the State of Israel.”

<sup>11</sup> Poland broke off diplomatic relations with Israel in accordance with Moscow’s wishes in the years 1967–1989, following Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War. ([Wilson Centre](#))





Wikimedia Commons: Białystok, 1939. The file description is an intentional distortion of history (quote): “Беласток пасля ўз'яднання з Беларуссю” (Białystok after *reunification* with Belarus). Białystok was never in BSSR in its history except for 21 months after the Soviet invasion of Poland, and until Operation Barbarossa of 1941. The banner reads: “Советская Белорусь” (*Sovetskaya Belarus*; Yiddish translation needed). Image source: Radyjo Racyja. In mere 21 months of the Soviet occupation of Białystok 387,932 Polish nationals were rounded up in its vicinity and beyond by the NKVD and their accomplices officially, and deported in freight trains to the steppes of Siberia.<sup>12</sup>

After two years of the NKVD terror in occupied eastern Poland – with more than 1.25 million Polish citizens,<sup>13</sup> 55 percent women, deported to Siberia, and 22,000 Polish officers and intelligentsia murdered at Katyn in cold blood (about 8% of the Katyn massacre victims were prominent Polish Jews) – for the first three months of Operation Barbarossa the Nazi German crimes against Jews were perpetrated against the Polish Jews, not the Russian Bolsheviks so vilified by Hitler. Obfuscating multiple times in

<sup>12</sup> Wikimedia Commons [Bialystok, 1939](#) reunification falsity. Image source: [Radyjo Racyja](#).

<sup>13</sup> Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia*, Princeton, 2002, pp. 146, 193-194 ([Google Books](#)). See, Vyshinskii.



Wikipedia the reality of the German-Soviet war, right in the middle of occupied Poland, was an intentional distortion of history.

Likewise, no article exists to this day in English Wikipedia about the local collaboration with the Soviet NKVD before 22 June 1941, and during the mass deportations of Polish nationals to Siberia (section below). As of early November 1939 in the former territory of Poland overrun by the Red Army, there were 1.6 million Polish Jews, including an estimated 1.3 million already living there and the 300,000 new refugees from the German-occupied zone of the country. Between 64,500 and 67,700 Polish Jews rejected Soviet citizenship.<sup>14</sup> They were subsequently deported to the NKVD camps in 1940.<sup>15</sup>

The 1939 attack on Poland by the alliance of Communism and Fascism created a historical anomaly, whereas colonization targets were reversed at the prearranged demarcation line from “Drang nach Osten” (on the German side) to “Вперед на запад!” (from Russia). According to Jan T. Gross<sup>16</sup> and others, for two years prior to Operation Barbarossa, in the Soviet zone of occupation Communist sympathies among national minorities, but also ethnic strife, and fear of insolvency, resulted in acts of duly noted collaboration with the Soviet secret service in ethnic cleansing of the Polish, Jewish, and (to a lesser degree) Ukrainian and Belorussian middle class; commodity producers, demobilized Polish soldiers, public servants, Jewish industrialists, Bund activists, industry professionals, engineers and their families (like that of my own mother), as well as tens of thousands of

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<sup>14</sup> Katharina Friedla & Markus Nesselrodt, *Polish Jews in the Soviet Union (1939–1959)*, Academic Studies PRes 2021, p. 54 ([Google Books](#)). Quote: “Polish Jews with Soviet citizenship were one of the *least* persecuted groups in the annexed territories.”

<sup>15</sup> Veronika Dyminska, “Deported, Exiled, Saved. History and Memory of Polish Jews in the Soviet Union (1940–1959).” Warsaw 2018, Conference Overview ([direct download](#)). Quote: “Even though many activists of *Bund* and its youth division, *Tsukunft*, managed to flee from the German occupied zone of Poland to the east, they were soon arrested by NKVD as ‘counterrevolutionary elements’ and sent mainly to Altai Krai” (Martyna Rusiniak-Karwat).

<sup>16</sup> Jan T. Gross, “A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes” [in:] *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, Princeton, 2009, pp. 93– ([Google Books](#)), quote: “Crowds lining up along the roads and greeting the Red Army soldiers were reported to have been composed predominantly of ‘minority youth.’” (Gross).

displaced persons – everywhere across eastern voivodeships, from Lwów (Lvov) in the south, Łuck (Lutsk), Pińsk (Pinsk), and Białystok to the north. Some of the border regions were populated almost exclusively by Poles and Jews before the invasion.<sup>17</sup> The lists of class enemies compiled for each deportation train depended solely upon the word of confidential informants.<sup>18</sup> In Wikipedia, the re-examination of facts concerning acts of collaboration with the Soviet NKVD is prohibited, technically speaking, since the 2018 *precedent-setting* case for the Stawiski village, as the quote unquote: “violation of any number of policies,” subject to disciplinary measures. The Stawiski case is cited in Grabowski & Klein as an attempt at falsification of history.<sup>19</sup> It was not. The WP:AE ruling against further research into the notion of treason was a form of Wikipedia’s own historical negationism espoused by Professor Grabowski’s *trusted* primary source in disguise; the evidence to the contrary was and is overwhelming (see below).

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<sup>17</sup> Daniel Boćkowski: *Okupacja sowiecka 1939–1941 i stosunki etniczne w Białymstoku* [*Soviet occupation 1939–1941 and inter-ethnic relations in Białystok*] in Polish, pp. 65, 73–76 in print ([direct download](#)). *Translation*: After the Soviet 17 September 1939 attack on eastern Poland, the first truly Soviet-generated archives appeared only at the end of the year. Until the outbreak of war, the border regions were inhabited almost exclusively by Poles and Jews. Thousands of soldiers and various functionaries of Russian and Belarusian nationality arrived from the USSR, entering Soviet statistical data as the locals. (p. 65 in print, or p. 1 in pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, p. 51 ([Google Books](#)). Ibidem. See also, Daniel Boćkowski, [“*Soviet occupation 1939–1941....*”] “*Okupacja sowiecka 1939–1941 i stosunki etniczne w Białymstoku....*”, ([direct download](#)), citing M. Wierzbicki, [*Polish Belarusian Ethnic Relations under the Soviet Occupation 1939–1941*], *Stosunki polsko-białoruskie pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941*, pp. 176–177. Wide spread collaboration confirmed by Maciej Franz, “In search of truth” [“W poszukiwaniu prawdy”]; Review of Jan Tomasz Gross, *Opowieści kresowe 1939–1941*, IPN, DOI: 10.48261/pis213839 ([direct download](#)). *Further reading*: Norman Davies & Antony Polonsky, *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46*, page 12 ([Google Books](#)).

Bonnie G. Smith, the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*. *Poland*, pp. 43, 469–470: “Authoritative figures for the number of deportees do not exist ... the Polish Justice Department claimed, 52 per cent were Poles, 30 per cent Jews, and 18 per cent Ukrainians and Byelorussians.” Among deportees, 55% were women.” ([Google Books](#)).

<sup>19</sup> Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Enforcement, June 2018 ‘War of the Sockpuppets’ with one account [topic banned](#) for restoring the factual information deleted by another. The ‘Stawiski’ precedent-setting ruling by the administration resulted in the suppression of information about local collaboration in ethnic cleansing of eastern Poland, with factually correct historical data (easily found online) expunged indefinitely. The WP:AE enforcement was a form of historical denialism by a number of Grabowski & Klein supporters.

The Herbert Hoover World War II Archive of the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation in Exile – formed in Paris after the defeat of Poland’s forces in World War II and the Red Army takeover of Kresy – consists of over 30 thousand reports, bulletins, memoirs, typed and hand-written depositions, and photographs, relating to conditions of life-and-death in Soviet occupied eastern Poland.<sup>20</sup> The collections include testimonies of former prisoners, survivors of roundups, and thousands of deportees to Siberia, who described the Soviet extrajudicial killings, staged elections, and the new lower-level management and law enforcement personnel which made those deportations possible. The HIA Collections were digitized in Poland by the Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe for the total of over 82 thousand files bearing descriptions in English, German and Russian; and include newly declassified documents made available after the fall of the Soviet-style authoritarianism based on disinformation. The files were utilized by a number of Polish historians, including Profs. Michał Gnatowski, and Tomasz Strzembosz (quote in translation, *Więź* 2001):

The very same documents from the Hoover Institution, supposedly so well known to Jan Gross, mention a whole list of cities and towns where the Jews enthusiastically welcomed the Red Army, and later on filled the ranks of militias: Zambrów, Łomża, Stawiski, Wizna, Szumowo (with the Jewish militia commandant by the name of Jablonka), Rakowo-Boginie, Bredki, Zabiele, Wądołki Stare, Drozdowo.<sup>21</sup>

Below is a sampling of the Ministry records from Stawiski, Łomża county in Białystok Voivodeship, held in the archives of the Hoover Institution at Stanford.

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<sup>20</sup> The Ministry of Information and Documentation records of Soviet deportations stored at Hoover can be found at [NAC](#) entries with 253 thousand [scans](#) and also (very selectively) at the San Francisco Polonia page [captured by Wayback](#). See: list of regional [districts featured](#), with testimonies of survivors of Soviet deportations to Siberia which include, but are not limited to: Stawiski, Grodno, Łomża, Kolno and Jedwabne ([Wayback](#)).

<sup>21</sup> Prof. Dr. Tomasz Strzembosz, “Panu Prof. Gutmanowi do sztambucha,” *Więź* 2001, Vol. 54, No. 6, translated by Mariusz Wesołowski as “The Ignored Collaboration.” [LiveJournal](#) (reused). Same paragraph, also in: “Przemilczana kolaboracja” *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 January 2001 ([paywall](#)).



Cyfrowe. For additional historical background, see B. Musiał (2000), M. Gnatowski (1997, 2001, 2004), and D.A. Wroniszewskis (1988).

Prof. Israel Gutman in his ‘Reply to Professor Tomasz Strzembosz’ published by Yad Vashem,<sup>22</sup> did not deny these allegations, thus leaving the impression of being unfamiliar with data about the two-year long period of local collaboration with the Soviet NKVD: “It is true that Jews held all kinds of posts in the Soviet occupation zone” he wrote, focusing predominantly on the Jewish accounts of the Red Army entry into Poland.

Stawiski does not need to be named as far as the outcome. In his book *Białystok to Birkenau: the Holocaust journey*, Michel Mielnicki remembered: “... mother was terribly upset by my father’s collaboration with the Russian secret service. I remember her begging him not to get involved. He disagreed. ‘We have to get rid of the fascists,’ he told her. ‘They deserve to go to Siberia’...”<sup>23</sup> Among deportees from eastern Poland 55 percent were women, statistically speaking; however, in the first two transports from Białystok to Pavlodar and Taiynsha in Kazakhstan on 13 April 1940, the women and children constituted almost 80 percent of all prisoners.<sup>24</sup> There is a notable disconnect between reality, and rhetoric offered, for example, by *The Nation* magazine of New York in 1987: “The Jews who welcomed the Russians were not anti-Polish. They were anti-German and anti-Fascist.” A non sequitur is not always apparent.

<sup>22</sup> Prof. Israel Gutman, “Reply to Professor Tomasz Strzembosz” *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. XXX, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 77- 93 [here](#). See also: Moshe Kleinbaum-Sneh Report to Nahum Goldmann” – Memorandum Concerning the Situation of the Jews in East Europe in the Beginning of World War II,” *Galed, on the History of the Jews in Poland* (Hebrew) vol. 4-5 (1978), pp. 561-562. Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> Michel Mielnicki, John A. Munro, *Białystok to Birkenau*, Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2000, pp. 82ff.. Also in: *The Neighbors Respond*, “Jedwabne: [Critical Remarks](#)” pp. 304–343, quote: “Michel Mielnicki whose father hosted gatherings of NKVD commissars in his home, as advisor, remembered him saying: Polish ‘fascists’ were ‘not good for the Jewish people’ and deserved to be sent to Siberia.” Mielnicki is quoted by Alexander B. Rossino in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* ed. by Michael C. Steinlauf and Antony Polonsky, after Bogdan Musiał citing Danuta & Aleksander Wroniszewski, “... ABY ŻYĆ.” *Kontakty*, Nr 27, 10 July 1988 in Polish: “during the deportation of local Poles to Siberia in the third week of June 1941, an armed Jew sat on every wagon onto which the deportees were loaded.” *Polin*, 2003, pp.431–442 (Google Books).

<sup>24</sup> Bonnie G. Smith, [Oxford Encyclopedia of Women](#), p. 470. *Supplementary data*: Bartłomiej Samarski, “Rocznica deportacji kwietniowych.” Archiwum Państwowe w Białymstoku ([Wayback](#)).



Hertzke Cheslok, who lived in Stawiski with family members, wrote about the position he held with the Soviet authorities there, but not a word about what his position entailed (this in fact, was the norm). Cheslok fled from Stawiski to Białystok with his Russian superiors when the war between USSR and Germany broke out in June 1941.<sup>25</sup> Population of Stawiski was around 3 thousand; about 2,000 inhabitants were Jewish. Earlier on, in the western territories overrun by the Wehrmacht, many Jewish communities stayed put until brutally expunged north-east from the Nazi realm as far as the Białystok area and beyond. In Grudziądz, the kehillah was ordered to pay 20,000 zł as the cost of their own expulsion behind the demarcation line. During the joint invasion of Poland, Białystok was taken over by the Germans on 20-21 September 1939. Two days later the Red Army 6th Division of the 6th Cavalry Corps was handed out the city like candy in accordance with the secret protocol of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact.<sup>26</sup>

People in the streets greeted the Russian army with great warmth. The professional associations and political organizations in the city filled the streets with red flags and flowers. The encounter was enthusiastic and friendly. Jewish youth, at that time already alienated from traditional Judaism, embraced the Russian soldiers who returned their friendliness. – *Rajzner 1948, Yiddish.*<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Herzl (Hertzke) Cheslok, “A brand plucked from the fire” in *Stawiski; sefer yizkor; Stawiski Memorial Book*, ed. by I. Rubin, Stavisk Society, 1973, p. 324, quote: “I found out that we would be fleeing to Białystok. I turned to my supervisor and requested that I be permitted to join the flight. He answered me with the following words: No, you will flee together with me, and you don’t have to worry.” Primary source reprinted by the JewishGen Yizkor Project. ([Wayback](#)).

<sup>26</sup> Maria Wardzyńska, *Był rok 1939 [The year was 1939]*. Warszawa, 2009, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (IPN), pp. 57, 125, 235. – Polish Jews were not always trying to escape from the Germans in the territories of Poland invaded by Nazi Germany. They were expelled to eastern borderlands from virtually all regions of prewar Poland, including from Mława, Przasnysz, Ostrołęka, Pułtusk, and behind the San River from all over Silesia. – Only after the Red Army attacked Poland on 17 September 1939, the demarcation line between the two invaders was put into reality. The two invading armies met on 22 September 1939 in Brześć. There were no plans for the Jewish genocide as of yet. ([DocPlayer.pl](#)).

<sup>27</sup> Refa’el Rayzner (Rafael Rajzner), “Białystok under Soviet Control” from *The Fall of Białystok Jewry – 1939-1945* originally titled *The Annihilation of Białystoker Jewry* (Der umkum fun Byalistoker Yidntum, 1939-1945) written in Yiddish and published in 1948 in Australia. Quoted here from *The Białystoker Memorial Book*, 1982, pp. 51-52, [available online](#). Book in translation



Following the September 1939 attack on Poland, the Soviet Union annexed Białystok as the new capital of West Belarus, the freshly formed extension of the Belarussian SSR. By the fall Białystok's population doubled. Food became scarce with lineups to buy bread starting the night earlier. "During the first weeks of war – wrote Korzec & Szurek – a wave of 300,000 to 400,000 refugees flowed eastwards, fleeing the German threat, and found work notably in administration" freshly formed by the Soviet officials. The Russian clerks, lacking familiarity with Polish, began hiring local aides from among Jewish refugees.<sup>28</sup> In the former Polish Wołyń Voivodeship further south, 12,300 local auxiliaries were hired in 1939 according to Ukrainian research. Some 3,500 Russian apparatchiks arrived from the USSR for the total of 15,800 functionaries and their local helpers in just one, out of eight Soviet-occupied provinces of prewar Poland. The total number of estimated non-Soviet deputies in the Second Republic can be multiplied by eight districts to almost 100,000 collaborators, since Belarus still keeps their KGB archives secret.<sup>29</sup>

After the Soviet regime's 21-month reign of terror in eastern Poland, and the flight from

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reprinted in 2008 by AMCL Publications, Catalog: [MELB 940.5318](#); 305 pages. Reviewed by R. Wiener in "Translated memoir..." by *New Jersey Jewish News*, 2010 ([Wayback](#)).

<sup>28</sup> Pawel Korzec & Jean-Charles Szurek, "Jews and Poles under the Soviet occupation (1939–1941): Conflicting Interests" [in] *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry Volume 4: Poles and Jews: Perceptions and Misperceptions* edited by Władysław T. Bartoszewski, 2004, pp. 207–208 ([Google Books](#)). Compare with Soviet-occupied Baltic states, where collaborationist governments were set up fluent in local language. See: Kevin O'Connor 2003, [Google Books](#), pp. 115–116. In Finland "a pro-Soviet puppet government headed by Otto Kuusinen [founder of the Communist Party of Finland] was quickly established." In the Baltic states (Rīga, Tallinn, Kaunas) legal cabinets were formed with Soviet-appointed locals.

<sup>29</sup> Albin Głowacki, "The Procedures of the Soviet Annexation of the Eastern Territories of the Second Polish Republic in 1939" ["Procedura aneksji przez ZSRR wschodnich ziem II Rzeczypospolitej w 1939 r."] *Dzieje Najnowsze*, Rocznik XXIX – 1997, 3 PL ISSN 0419-8824 (page 96 in original document, or 9 in pdf print), [direct download](#). Source of data about local auxiliaries of the NKVD: В. О. Шийчук, М.Я. Миць, Документи Державного Архіву Волинської Облaсті, про перші соціалістичні перетворення на Волині (вересень 1939 – червень 1941 рр, «Архіви України» 1985, № 6, С. 48 ([available online](#)). *English*: V.O. Shiychuk, M.Ya. Myts; "Documents of the State Archive of the Volyn Region, on the First Socialist Transformations in Volyn (September 1939 - June 1941)." *Archives of Ukraine*, 1985, No. 6, p. 48. The number of local accomplices who helped ethnically cleanse eastern Poland will never be known, but the rough estimate can be made based on the number of Polish nationals who asked for the Soviet passports.

Białystok in June and July 1941, advancing Nazi Germany renamed the region as *Bezirk Bjelostock* in mid-1941. The first German massacre by the Orpo Battalion 309 on June 27 (known as the ‘Red Friday’) claimed the lives of 2,200 Jews in the regional capital, shot in the park and burned alive in the Grand Synagogue.<sup>30</sup> Across all territories annexed by the USSR two years earlier, a wave of anti-Jewish violence erupted. There was a pogrom in Wizna and in Szczuczyn at the end of June; in Stawiski in early July, in Wąsosz (July 5), Radziłów (July 7), Jedwabne (July 10), Łomża (early August), Tykocin (August 22–25), Rutki (September 4) followed by Piątница, Zambrów as well as nearby locations.<sup>31</sup> Beyond behavioural contagion, their barbarism seemed otherwise inexplicable.

In the south-east, due to prior wave of the NKVD atrocities against the Polish-Ukrainian civilians, considerably more pogroms swept through the territories annexed by the USSR. Fifty-eight Jewish communities were struck by pogroms in modern-day Ukraine in the summer of 1941, including Lviv (Lwów), Ternopil (Tarnopol), Zolochiv (Złoczów), Zbarazh (Zbaraż), Hrymaliv (Grzymałów), Peremyshlyany (Przemyślany), Ivano-Frankivsk (Stanisławów), Drohobych, Buchac (Buczacz), Boryslav, Delatyn, Dubno etc. In all named settlements of western Volhynia, listed by Wendy Lower, the local Jews were blamed for the Soviet prisoner massacres: “The conflation of Jews with the crimes of the Soviet regime was an irrational sentiment rooted in emotions of resentment, fear and anger toward a minority that could most easily be blamed.”<sup>32</sup> The collaborators fled into USSR.

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<sup>30</sup> Christopher R. Browning (1998) [1992]. “Arrival in Poland.” *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. Penguin Books, pp. 11–12 in print or 27–29 in pdf. Chpt. 3. See also: Note 8, p. 12 (29 in PDF), source: YVA, TR-10/823 (Landgericht Wuppertal judgment 12 Ks 1/67): 40–” ([direct download](#)), Wayback.

<sup>31</sup> M. Sypniewska, K. Bielawski, A. Dylewski: “Białystok – Jewish Community.” *Virtual Shtetl Museum of the History of Polish Jews*, pp. 6–7 ([available online](#)). “Encyclopedia Judaica and Christopher Browning confirm the death of 2,200 Jews on June 27 (‘Red Friday’) as well as about 300 Jewish intellectuals on July 3rd, and over 3,000 Jews on July 12, 1941 (‘Black Saturday’), for the total of over 5,500 Jewish victims of Orpo terror in the opening weeks of Operation Barbarossa.”

<sup>32</sup> Wendy Lower, “Pogroms, mob violence and genocide in western Ukraine, summer 1941” *Journal of Genocide Research* (2011), 13(3), September 2011, 217–246 ([direct download](#)), p. 16 in

It is not far from self-evident, why the true dialogue is still impossible between the Jewish and the Polish writers on the subject of Stalin's annexation of the eastern half of the Second Republic. It is because contemporary ideologues seem afraid that, informing about instances of collaboration with the Russian secret service against one's country of citizenship, would undermine the suffering and somehow devalue the fortuitous survival of others. But nothing could be further from the truth. In the territory of the Second Republic controlled by the Soviet Union from September 1939 until June 22, 1941, there were over 200,000 Jewish refugees among Poland's national minorities (many of whom were expelled, but also fled from the Germans across the demarcation line). They were soon deported with Christian Poles and others in cattle cars to the steppes of Altai region and Soviet Kazakhstan. Historians Dzienis-Todorczuk & Markiewicz wrote in Polish:

The third deportation action of June 29, 1940 covered mainly the so-called *bieżeńcy* (Russian: беглецы), i.e. refugees from the German zone of occupation, two-thirds of whom were Jews. Many representatives of the intelligentsia became the victims of this deportation, including doctors, and people of science. The total number of deportees was about 80,000. They ended up in Siberia, mostly in the Arkhangelsk, Sverdlovsk, and Novosibirsk oblasts, as well as in the republics of Komi, Mariinskaya, Yakutsk and Altai Krai. This deportation was slightly different from the previous ones: the deportees were carted away over several days to collection points where the transports were formed, and they were assured that they would return to the lands occupied by the Third Reich.<sup>33</sup>

Dozens of prominent historians in English including Yitzhak Arad, Norman Davies, Antony Polonsky, Alexander Rossino, Dov Levin, and Timothy Snyder explain that the history of the Holocaust in Poland cannot be told without observing the dynamics of life in

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pdf. "Peremyshliany was one of at least fifty-eight Jewish communities struck by pogroms in summer 1941." (p. 6)

<sup>33</sup> Magdalena Dzienis-Todorczuk & Marcin Markiewicz, "Wagony szły na Wschód. Rzecz o sowieckich deportacjach z lat 1940–1941" [The Freight Cars Went East. Treatise on the Soviet Deportations of 1940–1941], 2/2015, Miesięcznik „Pamięć.pl” monthly, [direct download](#).

the borderlands.<sup>34</sup> And although there were trainloads of Jewish families among the persecuted, other Jews “played a relatively large role in the Communist Party apparatus that was behind the action” according to Levin (also Cienciala, Stachura, and Snyder) not to mention numerous historians in the Polish language who confirmed these findings (Gnatowski, Śleszyński, Żbikowski, Jasiewicz, Boćkowski, Grzelak, etc.).<sup>35</sup> Virtually in all locations, “Jewish militiamen helped NKVD agents send local Poles into exile” wrote Arad.<sup>36</sup> Following the Nazi German attack on the Soviet positions in occupied Poland, the frequent “labeling of the Soviet administration as a ‘Jewish regime’ – Arad continued – became widespread.”<sup>37</sup> The issue is sensitive, wrote Polonsky, because the engaged *volunteer* forces assisted in the mass deportation of not only 52 percent Poles, but also 30 percent Jews, and 18 percent ethnic Ukrainians and Byelorussians.

<sup>34</sup> Prof. Timothy Snyder, [“Life and Death of Jews from Western Volhynia, 1921–1945”] *Życie i śmierć Żydów z zachodniego Wołynia, 1921–1945*; in Polish, pp. 255–. IPN, *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, bi-annual, nr 1 (25)/2015. VARIA, pdf, [direct download](#).

<sup>35</sup> Prof. Anna M. Cienciala, *The Rise and Fall of Communist Nations, 1917–1994*. [Publications](#), chapter 4, V. 6-B, *quote*: “While most of the Jewish population of eastern Poland was politically passive, some Jews, especially young men and women with Communist sympathies, cooperated with the Soviets. They became prominent in the new local militia and helped Soviet authorities in hunting down Polish political leaders and administrators. Although these pro-communist Jews made up a very small minority of the total Jewish population, they were highly visible...” *See also*, Peter D. Stachura, *Polish-Jewish Relations in the Aftermath of the Holocaust: Reflections and Perspectives*, University of Stirling, 2001, p. 87. *Also in*: Peter D. Stachura, *Poland in the Twentieth Century*, Macmillan & St. Martin’s Press, 1999; pp. 102–103. *Further reading*: Jacek Romanek (2020) [“Collaboration with the Soviets among national minorities of interwar Poland”] *Kolaboracja mniejszości narodowych II Rzeczypospolitej z Sowietami*, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej IPN, [Biuletyn, 1-2/2020](#), *quote in translation*: ‘Although 80 years have gone by since the Soviet invasion of Poland, we don’t have a full analysis of the extent and consequences of the collaboration of our national minorities with the aggressor.’ *Further reading*: Michał Gnatowski [1997](#); Wojciech Śleszyński [2001](#); Andrzej Żbikowski [2006](#); Krzysztof Jasiewicz [2018](#); Daniel Boćkowski [2011](#); Grzegorz Grzelak [2021](#). (Direct downloads)

<sup>36</sup> Yitzhak Arad, *The Partisan: From the Valley of Death to Mount Zion*, New York: Holocaust Library, 1979, pp. 26f. [Also in:] *The Neighbors Respond* by Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, Princeton University Press, 2009, [p. 331](#). The same information from Arad is also featured in Rossino, *ibidem*, [Notes 58 & 59](#): Yitzhak Arad, *The Partisan*, pp. 26f. Arad wrote: “the expulsions also brought about increased anti-Semitism, because although there were thousands of Jews among the exiles, Jews played a relatively large role in the Communist party apparatus that was behind the action.” The action was conducted not by the party apparatus per se, but rather by the NKVD Commissariat for State Security [RT].

<sup>37</sup> Yitzhak Arad, *ibidem*, pp. 26f. Prof. Marek Wierzbicki (2022), *ibidem*, pp. 207–210.

Historical narratives do not reveal truth about what has passed — they reveal conflicting interests in *transforming* the past. Wikipedia all but denies that those tragic events had merit. The page ‘collaboration in Soviet-occupied Poland’ has never been considered. By contrast, collaboration with the Axis Alliance in Wikipedia is a virtual library of separate entries subdivided into collaboration by country within Western Europe including Belgium, the Channel Islands, Denmark, Vichy France, Luxembourg, Norway, Albania, Baltic states, Poland, as well as the Soviet Union, and nascent Belarus.<sup>38</sup> The complete absence of information about the collaboration with the Soviet NKVD is not a coincidence. The intentional distortion of the history of deportations of over 1.25 million Polish nationals from Soviet-occupied Poland is a handiwork of POV warriors and their Wikipedia sympathizers, some of whom Grabowski and Klein try to portray as anonymous tragic heroes.

An effective gag on information about eastern Poland in English Wikipedia goes back well over 15 years, harking back to the 2008 ArbCom case whereas Polish help to Jews was first entered into *evidence* as the alleged Polish POV bias. Likewise, the 2018 Stawiski kangaroo proceedings at Wikipedia Enforcement has turned – what could have been – a standard request for more citations, into a spectacle of historical denialism by Professor Grabowski’s own unacknowledged *ghostwriter* using dozens of aliases on English Wikipedia, and spreading inflammatory misinformation since well over a decade ago.

One could argue that the Nazi German ‘resettlement’ ruse for the mass deportation of Jews from the ghettos,<sup>39</sup> wasn’t unfathomable, because the Polish society was already accustomed to train deportations by the USSR for two consecutive years. Following the

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<sup>38</sup> The “Collaboration with the Axis powers” in English Wikipedia. – After some aggressive back and forth which went on for five years, the Babi Yar massacre disappeared in [May 2023](#). And so did OUN- M confirmed, as being involved, by [Brandon & Lower](#) among other historians. Wikipedia is a fast-moving target for commentators. Frequently, users in the Holocaust genre are students replaced by similar others instantaneously.

<sup>39</sup> Simone Gigliotti, *The Train Journey: Transit, Captivity, and Witnessing in the Holocaust*, Berghahn Books, 2010, [pp. 3–4 in pdf](#). See also, JSTOR: [Open Access](#).



invasion of eastern Poland, the arrests and roundups for mass deportations to Siberia, Kazakhstan, Arkhangelsk and Kamchatka were managed and administered by the Soviet Commissariat for State Security. The functionaries would have had no idea who-was-who locally,<sup>40</sup> if it wasn't for the radicalized element among inhabitants of eastern voivodeships of the Second Republic who played a role in the escalation of the territorial and demographic range of Soviet ethnic cleansing. Jan Karski, a Polish Courier cited by Polonsky, Piotrowski, as well as Korzec & Szurek, reported in 1940:

Certainly it is so that Jewish communists adopted an enthusiastic stance toward the Bolsheviks, regardless of the social class from which they came. The Jewish proletariat, small merchants, artisans, and all those whose position has at present been improved structurally and who had formerly been exposed to oppression, indignities, excesses, etc., from the Polish element – all of these responded positively, if not enthusiastically, to the new regime. Their attitude seems to me quite understandable.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike the Germans or the British and French or the Russians, the Poles have a history of living under the foreign occupation across generations, including during the 123 years of Partitions; in the decades of the Swedish Deluge, under the Tatar raids,<sup>42</sup> the First, Second and Third Mongol invasions, but also during the World Wars. Guided by a protective instinct rooted in language and the Catholic tradition, the Polish identity was manifestly different from both, the Orthodox Russia, and the Protestant Germany. That is what the Polish *raison d'être* was. The historians who teach about Poland's transnational

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<sup>40</sup> Prof. Marek Wierzbicki, "Nationalities in a totalitarian state. The case of East Central Europe under the Soviet occupation (1939-1941)" in *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 20 (2022), pp. 207–210 in pdf ([direct download](#)).

<sup>41</sup> Antony Polonsky [in], *Holocaust: Responses to the persecution and mass murder of the Jews*, 2004, p. 49. [Google Books](#). Also in: Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947*, McFarland, 2007. Chpt.: "Soviet occupation," pp. 48-52; both citing Karski: "The Situation of the Jews on Territories Occupied by the USSR" ([Google books](#)).

<sup>42</sup> Mikhail Kizilov, *Slavery in the Black Sea Region*, Brill 2021. From [Introduction](#): the "Tatar predatory raids into Polish territory started in 1468 and ended in 1769. According to some estimates, the total number of captives seized in Poland between c.1500 and c.1700 could have been as many as a million."



memory conflicts, such as Richard C. Lukas were treated like jingoists by editors of Wikipedia associated with Grabowski & Klein, following the authors' heuristics.<sup>43</sup>

## A room full of elephants

The complaints about 'bias' by Grabowski & Klein merit consideration mainly by the polar opposite of what they imagine occurs in Wikipedia. Manipulations through framing used to be endemic in previous years, and could not be dealt with by administrative means, because many CT/EE sanctions by the 'guardians' of bias among editors involved, were meted out in disregard for the good faith principle. Wikipedia contributors hidden from scrutiny and thrilled by the boogeyman-hunt found war-torn Poland a good target for their own teleological judgements. There's maybe half a dozen of them today (hiding behind the guise of inflated assumptions), following and backing each other up since 2017 at the earliest. Commenting publicly on their implicit bias can carry some of the harshest penalties (see T-BAN of Poeticbent without warning in 2018). Following my departure, the same sock puppet account – idolized by Grabowski & Klein without a shred of intellectual honesty – staged several essentially McCarthyist show trials hanging on a single line of evidence. I have described one of them in my 2019 essay.<sup>44</sup> In the two years before his ban, the same abusive user launched a blizzard of complaints at WP:AE against Wikipedians connected to Poland including university professors volunteering their time off (more below).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Richard C. Lukas, "[Is it History or Propaganda?](#)" *Polish American Journal*, 2023. The "editors of Wikipedia modified at least two of the biographies of historians who were targets of the authors' criticisms." [...] "The larger issue is not Wikipedia but the hijacking of Polish wartime history by a group of Jewish historians who, in this *post-fact* world, seem more interested in exaggeration and hyperbole than in facts and analysis."

<sup>44</sup> Richard Tylman, "The Fake Nazi Death Camp: Wikipedia's Longest Hoax' conspiracy theory invented by a banned Wikipedian." Haaretz's article's rebuttal. [Substack ©2023](#) [[Academia ©2019](#), [Wikipedia ©2019](#)]

<sup>45</sup> Wikipedia Arbitration 2019 Case: "History of Poland during World War II, including the Holocaust in Poland." [Workshop](#).

My experience of speaking out against distortions of history was practically mirrored by the departure of my American-Jewish colleague, former administrator who served for almost 6 years and has made more than 100,000 edits. While speaking out against Israeli apartheid, he referred to the same Grabowski's *trusted* primary source as "a cancer on Wikipedia." The tag-team of editors who framed him, later worked hand in glove with Grabowski & Klein. Wikipedia procedures – built around simplified ways to stop the so-called 'unwanted' behavior – although not intentionally, amount to cloaked forms of retaliation against whistleblowers.

Gratuitous frame-ups staged at Wikipedia:AE by the primary data vendor for Grabowski & Klein worked as planned, because Wikipedians in positions of authority wouldn't know how to exercise leadership in the face of adversity. In the Polish-Jewish dialog, the campaign to discredit the historians of Poland and their publishers on the basis of foreign hostility toward Poland, continued in Wikipedia for several years, with editors praised in Grabowski & Klein searching for any opportunity to inflict damage. The most brazen assault on the reputation of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) was attempted by Grabowski & Klein's *uncredited* co-author a year before his global ban, with claims of alleged historical revisionism.<sup>46</sup> The Institute of National Remembrance, with 2,300 staff, 90 kilometres of archived documents, and over 1,200 monographs by professional historians, was demonized in an attempt to make it into an 'unreliable' source; i.e. the WP:RS 'violation' of history reference guide. Imagine trying to paint Yad Vashem in a similar light. The paper by Grabowski & Klein – amid claims of Wikipedia's intentional distortion of history – hides political extremism of its own suppliers of data.

## Argumentum ad populum

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<sup>46</sup> Wikimedia-Xtools: "Institute of National Remembrance" General statistics: Text [deleted](#).

Wikipedians aiming to sanitize history, found a way of gaming the system to stifle publication of uncomfortable truths. Magic tricks depend on the negative feedback loops mediated by the self-perceived competence.

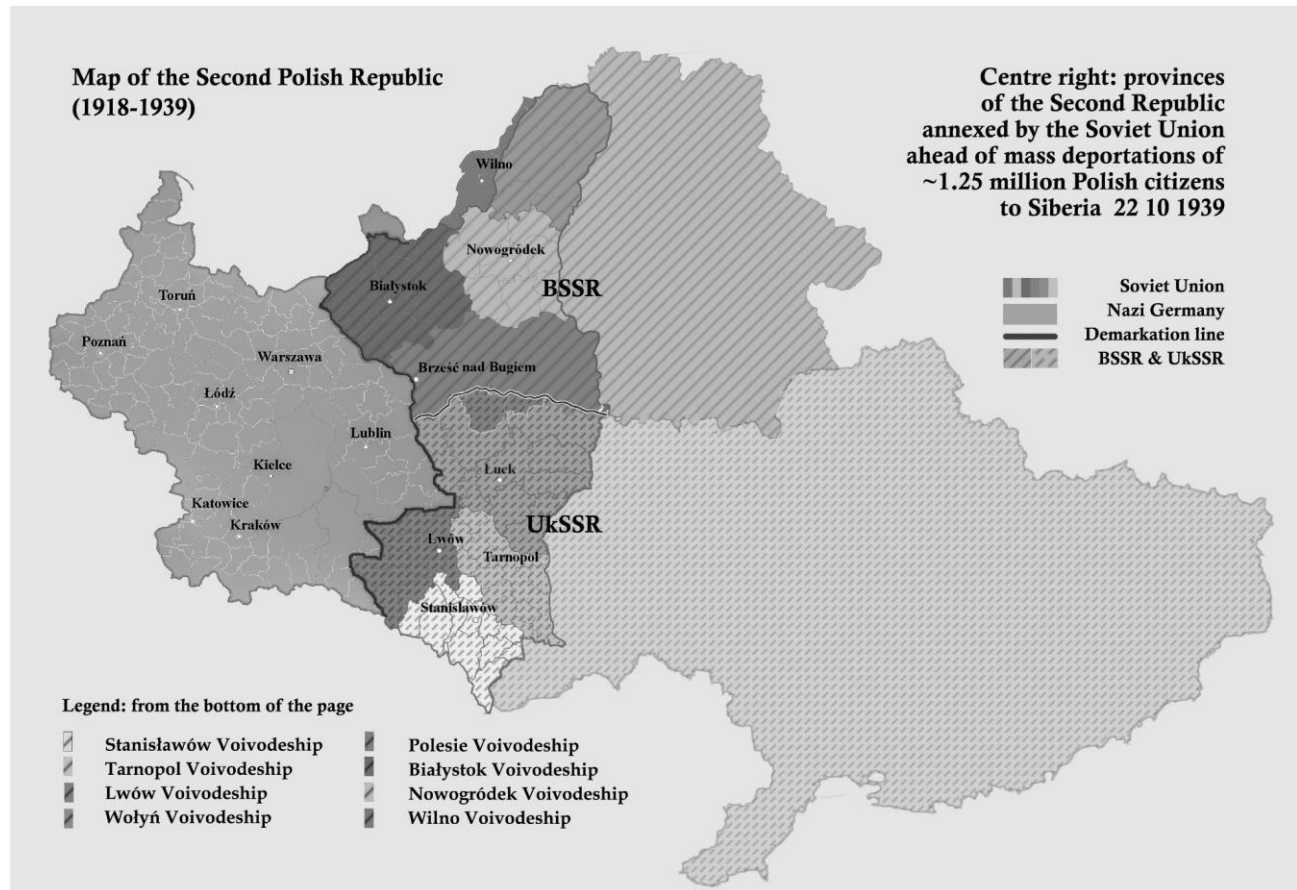
Removing inconvenient historical facts is a step by step process. The outcome depends on the ‘issue framing’ i.e. coordinating and guiding the volunteers at the Reliable Source Noticeboard into agreeing on something *else* in Wikipedia. The WP:RSN is a place where historical accuracy becomes insignificant. Instead, historians and their publishers are judged. This is also, where the use of derogatory, pejorative and insulting words yields tangible results. “Fringe,” “obscure,” “nonacademic,” “far-right,” “not reliable,” “shameful,” “unknown,” “minor,” to quote the un-credited author of *evidence* section in Grabowski & Klein, who’s in hiding. He visited that noticeboard 617 times in mere 3 years before his global ban, making an average of up to 30 posts each time, because ‘removing’ historical facts cited from historians socially stigmatized at WP:RSN becomes somewhat procedural in mainspace. Even though on several occasions in the past Professor Grabowski admitted to being unfamiliar with Wikipedia’s internal processes (Konieczny, 2023), nevertheless the similarities between the WP:ATTACK in Wikipedia RSN, and the methods used by Grabowski & Klein to denigrate Poland’s historians – as far as attempts to sway opinions of unsuspecting audiences – are striking.

Wartime collaboration is a sensitive issue.<sup>47</sup> The group of Wikipedians associated with Grabowski & Klein fought tooth and nail to have the collaboration with the NKVD after

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<sup>47</sup> Prof. Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w Zaborze Sowieckim [Poles and Belorussians under the Soviet Occupation]*, Warsaw, *Volumen 2000 (Frona 2007)*, ISBN 8372331618, (quote in translation, p. 137): “The greatly complex Soviet management structures in occupied Poland gave the masses of unemployed Jews a chance for a position, which – in borderland towns with no industries and limited job market – was of paramount significance. The Jewish population on the whole, representing a much higher level of education than the Byelorussian minority, provided clerks, educators, and security police functionaries, which had a significant impact on the Polish-Jewish relations, because the Jews most often took over jobs of ethically Polish civil servants.”

the Soviet invasion of Poland expunged from relevant articles (it was denied in the U.S. already in the 1980s).<sup>48</sup> To do that, the claim of ‘unreliable’ sourcing had to be manufactured first. In Wikipedia, this is called *verifiability*.



On September 17, 1939, the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east as agreed in the Pact with Nazi Germany, and annexed 52 percent of its territory, comprised of eight voivodeships, with regional capitals in Stanisławów, Tarnopol, Lwów, Łuck (now part of sovereign Ukraine), Brześć, Białystok, Nowogródek and Wilno (now Vilnius, Lithuania).

The actual *real* distortionists from the Grabowski & Klein political faction succeeded in deleting the ‘Brzostowica Mała massacre’ from English Wikipedia on 2nd nomination in

<sup>48</sup> *The Nation* magazine, November 21, 1987 [in:] *Professors, Politics and Pop* by Wiener (1991), page 84 (quote): “The Jews who welcomed the Russians were left-wing but not anti-Polish – they were anti-German and anti-Fascist.” Compare this with Mielnicki (2000), page 90 (quote): “Polish fascists were not good for the Jewish people and deserved to be sent to Siberia.” (Rossino)

2018.<sup>49</sup> It is featured in Polish, and in Belarussian Wikipedias, which are beyond the inverted distortionists home turf. Brzostowica Mała was annexed by the USSR in 1939, and became part of sovereign Belarus in 1990. At least 17 of the Polish victims of brutal killings are known by name.<sup>50</sup> The long list of historians who wrote in Polish about that massacre includes Krzysztof Jasiewicz (1995), Ryszard Szawłowski in his monograph *Wojna polsko-sowiecka 1939* (from 1997) and Marek Wierzbicki in *Polacy i Białorusini w zaborze sowieckim* published in 2000; *but also* Chodakiewicz (2002) in *Ejszyski* (p. 242); Wybranowski (2002) in *Kłopotliwe śledztwo*, and Paul (2017) in *Neighbours* (p. 7). Perhaps not by coincidence, the 1939 atrocities by the ad hoc extremist militias in eastern Poland were investigated by the IPN together with the Jedwabne massacre perpetrated two years later upon the attack by the Germans. Prof. Marek Wierzbicki from University of Lublin wrote at length about the massacres of ethnic Poles committed by their own countrymen during the Soviet invasion of the Second Republic.<sup>51</sup>

According to critical, if not hostile scholarship by Strzembosz,<sup>52</sup> Wierzbicki, and Michałowicz among the Polish historians, the list of confirmed settlements, where brutal murders were committed against unarmed Poles and their families includes: Grodno, Skidel, Jeziory, Łunna, Wiercieliszki, Wielka Brzostowica, Ostryna, Dubno, Dereczyn,

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<sup>49</sup> “Wikipedia:Articles for deletion/Massacre of Brzostowica Mała ([2nd nomination](#))” initiated by Grabowski & Klein’s *un-credited* co-author hiding on and off Wikipedia. The article was ‘deleted’ with the rationale: “opinions do not substantially address the sourcing problems.” The sourcing [by IPN](#) and various professors of history, was in the Polish language.

<sup>50</sup> Iwona Łaptaszyńska, “List of people murdered during the so-called *days of emancipation*” derived from Marek Wierzbicki, *Polacy i Białorusini w Zaborze Sowieckim* (ibidem). [Wayback](#).

<sup>51</sup> Prof. Marek Wierzbicki, “Stosunki polsko-białoruskie pod okupacją sowiecką (1939-1941)” [Polish-Belarussian relations under Soviet rule], *Zeszyty Historyczne*, IPN Warszawa, pp. 172-193 ([direct download](#)). Also in: Wierzbicki, “Powstanie skidelskie 1939 r.” [“The Skidel Uprising of 1939”], Warszawa, *Zeszyty Historyczne*, pp.75-99 ([direct download](#)).

<sup>52</sup> Prof. Tomasz Strzembosz, “Covered-up Collaboration,” [in:] William Brand, ed., *Thou Shalt Not Kill; Poles on Jedwabne* (Warsaw: Więź, 2001), pp. 165-184, translated by M. Wesolowski from “Przemilczana kolaboracja,” *Rzeczpospolita*, January 27, 2001. Starting on 18 September 1939, the attacks directed against the Polish state included: “the two-day struggle for Skidel, Jewish revolts in Jeziory, Łunna, Wiercieliszki, Wielka Brzostowica, Ostryna, Dubno, Dereczyn, Zelwa, Motol, Wołpa, Janów Poleski, Wołkowysk, Horodec and Drohiczyn Poleski. In these localities nobody had seen a single German.” ([Google](#)) Also in M. Wierzbicki, 2000 ([Google](#)).



Zelwa, Motol, Wołpa, Janów Poleski, Wołkowysk, and Drohiczyn Poleski.<sup>53</sup>

## Human lives as political pawns

Grabowski & Klein devote an entire section of their 58-page paper to the ‘rescue of Jews by Poles during the Holocaust’, not to honour the courage of extraordinary women and men, but to accuse the Polish society in general of cowardice and treachery. The authors use a literary device of dramatic irony (otherwise known as parochialism) to prove a point and describe the terrible ordeal of Ms. Wyrzykowska, the Righteous from Jedwabne; written about by Bikont. All other academic works devoted to settlements engaged in helping fugitives from the ghettos in occupied Poland, collectively, were either ignored or intentionally overlooked, including monographs by Bender & Weiss (2011), Berenstein & Rutkowski (2008), Gutman & Bender (2005), Grynberg & Kotowska (2003), Tomaszewski & Werbowski (1999), Wroński & Zwolakowa (1998), Bartoszewski & Lewin (1969, 1998, 2017) and many other books by professional historians.<sup>54</sup>

The Wikipedia article “Rescue of Jews by Poles during the Holocaust” was created and rewritten to reflect the highest standards of quality in November 2008, edited 1,405 times

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<sup>53</sup> Shoah Resource Center, *The International School for Holocaust Studies* 7/1: “Thoughts of Professor Tomasz Strzembosz on Professors Gutman’s Diary.” Source: Yad Vashem Studies, XXX, Jerusalem, 2002, pp. 7-20. [Wayback](#).

<sup>54</sup> Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, *Righteous Among Nations: How Poles Helped the Jews, 1939–1945*, [Google Books](#); Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*, [Google Books](#); Tatiana Berenstein and Adam Rutkowski, *Assistance to the Jews in Poland, 1939-1945*, pp. [7, 37](#) - [10, 45, 46](#)-, [Google Books](#); Sara Bender and Pearl Weiss, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust - Europe (Part II)*; Israel Gutman, *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, pp. [828](#) - [151, 366](#), [Google Books](#); Gutman, Bender, Krakowski, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust - Poland* [2 Volume Set]; Michał Grynberg, Maria Kotowska, *Życie i zagłada Żydów polskich, 1939-1945: relacje świadków* [Life and extermination of Polish Jews], [Google Books](#); Irene Tomaszewski and Tacia Werbowski, *Code Name: Zegota: Rescuing Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942-1945: The Most Dangerous Conspiracy in Wartime Europe*, Price-Patterson, 1994 [1999, 2010], [Google Books](#); Stanisław Wroński and Maria Zwolakowa, *Polacy Żydzi 1939-1945* [Poles and Jews], [Google Books](#).



by 305 editors and seen by enough eyes to spot what might have been a problem. The estimate of three million non-Jewish deaths in Poland during World War II came from the book by Richard Lukas held by 1,255 libraries worldwide (Worldcat).<sup>55</sup> Grabowski & Klein claim that the figure is false (p. 8 in pdf), and mention the 1994 publication by Czesław Łuczak in Polish, but Łuczak more-less confirmed the same information by counting in all minorities.<sup>56</sup> Twenty years after the release of *Out of the Inferno* by Lukas; in 2009, Professors Wojciech Materski and Tomasz Szarota of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance published a monumental collection of research papers by 26 leading historians titled *Polska 1939-1945* [*Poland 1939-1945. War Casualties and Victims of Repressions under Two Occupations*],<sup>57</sup> placing the number of Poland's World War II losses at 5.6 to 5.8 million citizens, with 2,7 to 2,9 million Jews, including 1.86 million Jews exterminated in Nazi German death camps on Polish soil. President of IPN Janusz Kurtyka in his public service announcements and in the book's 'Foreword' informed that – following decades of meticulous research – these findings are “the official voice of the Republic of Poland.”<sup>58</sup> The book is available from most leading university libraries in hardcover.

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<sup>55</sup> Richard Lukas, *Out of the Inferno*, University Press of Kentucky, [p. 5](#): “During the German occupation, three million Christian Poles perished, out of a total Polish population of some 27 million in 1935.” Ibidem, p.13: “Estimates of the number of Poles who perished at the hands of the Germans for aiding Jews vary from a few thousand to fifty thousand.”

<sup>56</sup> Czesław Łuczak, “Szanse i trudności bilansu demograficznego Polski w latach 1939-1945” [Difficulties in demographic balance], *Dzieje Najnowsze* 1994, 2, pp. 9-14: Total of 5.9 million, with 2.9 million Jews. [Wayback](#).

<sup>57</sup> Wojciech Materski, Tomasz Szarota, *Polska 1939-1945. Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod dwiema okupacjami* [*Poland 1939-1945. War Casualties and Victims of Repressions under Two Occupations*], IPN ([excerpts](#)). Machine translation: [Google](#). Further reading: Piotr Zychowicz, “Mit sześciu milionów” *Rzeczpospolita*, June 6, 2009, [Wayback](#).

<sup>58</sup> Janusz Kurtyka, public service announcement; *Polska Agencja Prasowa* PAP, “IPN: w II wojnie św. zginęło od 5,6 do 5,8 mln polskich obywateli.” [Wayback](#). From *Foreword* to *Polska 1939-1945* “Łączne straty śmiertelne ludności polskiej pod okupacją niemiecką oblicza się obecnie na ok. 2 770 000. Liczbę tę należy traktować orientacyjnie. Do strat należy doliczyć ponad 100 tys. Polaków pomordowanych w latach 1942-1945 przez nacjonalistów ukraińskich (w tym na samym Wołyniu ok. 60 tys. osób). Z kolei po weryfikacji m.in. badań dotyczących ofiar obozu koncentracyjnego w Auschwitz-Birkenau uważa się, że liczba Żydów i Polaków żydowskiego pochodzenia, obywateli II Rzeczypospolitej, zamordowanych przez Niemców sięga 2,7- 2,9 mln

Grabowski & Klein make no mention of the 2009 monograph *Polska 1939-1945*, and neither did the article in Wikipedia. The authors quote an essay by Gniazdowski who never appeared in the aforementioned Wikipedia article in its 15-year history either (see XTools). Grabowski & Klein assert that the “estimate of 3 million non-Jewish Polish victims of World War II was pulled out of thin air in 1946 by Jakub Berman.” That anecdote is well known in Poland and has been mentioned by Kurtyka as well, but Berman’s directive was about the 6 million dead – not about the 3 million Polish victims (i.e.: “ustalić liczbę zabitych na 6 mln ludzi”). The ‘6 million’ was based on the research by Henryk Kopec, Jerzy Osiecki, and deliberations of numerous others, combining the 4.8 million dead (Kopec) with 1.2 million missing (Osiecki). Berman streamlined the memorandum of the Polish delegation for the conference in London to win the hearts of western policymakers. He put forward the round number; he didn't pull it out of thin air. The essay by Gniazdowski also features the full text of the 1946 directive by Berman, along with the analysis of all supplementary documents.<sup>59</sup> Regrettably, Gniazdowski is not featured among the historians contributing to the 2009 compendium *Polska 1939-1945*.<sup>60</sup>

## Mole people and lizard people

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osób (w tym w obozach śmierci 1 860 000 osób; w samych Ponarach zginęły 72 142 osoby. Sądzić zatem można, że z rąk Niemców zginęło ok. 5 470 000-5 670 000 Polaków i Żydów - obywateli polskich.” (Kurtyka) *Gazeta Prawna*, 2009-08-26, [Wayback](#).

<sup>59</sup> Mateusz Gniazdowski, 2008 essay “Ustalić liczbę zabitych na 6 milionów ludzi” ([Wayback](#)); original quote in Polish, pp. 100-101: “Straty w ludziach, ustalone przez Kopcia, zostały podane w prowizorycznym „Zestawieniu strat i szkód wojennych Polski w latach 1939–1945” (materialnych, biologicznych i kulturalnych). W odniesieniu do strat biologicznych stwierdzono w nim, że liczba 4.8 mln wraz ze zmniejszoną liczbą urodzeń (1,25 mln) powoduje, że „biologiczny potencjał polski poniósł skutek wojny łączną stratę 6 milionów 50 tys. ludzi, co wynosi  $\pm 25\%$  stanu ludności”. Opracowanie bilansu strat Polski było istotnym elementem przygotowań do konferencji zastępców ministrów spraw zagranicznych w Londynie, która miała się odbyć w styczniu 1947 r.”

<sup>60</sup> Grabowski & Klein (p. 8 in pdf) quoted Gniazdowski without a working URL link ([here](#) from Wayback). See: [contributors](#) to the compendium *Polska 1939-1945* (published a year after him); papers by J. Kurtyka, W. Grabowski, K. Latuch, J. Leociak, G. Berendt, E. Rejf, A. Chmielarz, M. Wardzyńska, M. Rutkowska, A. Dzierżanowska, F. Piper, A.K. Kunert, A. Laszuk & W. Sawicki, G. Grzelak, W. Materski, K. Jasiewicz, A. Głowacki, E. Kowalska, S. Ciesielski, M. Zwolski, A. Paczkowski, M. Golon, D. Węgrzyn, G. Hryciuk and R. Dzwonkowski.

The paper by Grabowski & Klein was released by Taylor & Francis Online *Journal of Holocaust Research* on 9 February 2023 under ‘open access’. It was archived at Wayback on the same day. At JHR, the authors pay a publishing charge to give their publication ‘open access’ visibility. By mid March the webpage received 33 thousand views and became the focus of an arbitration case launched in Wikipedia without a formal request,<sup>61</sup> identifying 18 users as involved including Shira Klein who is an active Wikipedian. Sanctions were meted out on 20 May 2023. The arbitration case was prompted entirely by the thesis of the Grabowski & Klein paper – an external academic publication – intended to influence Wikipedia in the direction of cathartic purging of the-not-so-distant and faraway past.

The essay whipped the community into a frenzy of sanctimonious indignation over the contributions of volunteers framed in an accusatory manner, even if long, long gone. The most amusing was the attempt made by contributors associated with Grabowski & Klein to circumvent the 2019 ArbCom ruling, and recriminate Poeticbent; absent from Wikipedia for 5 years as of 2023 (last mainspace edit on 14 May 2018). Old conspiracy theories never die. The rumours peddled by the same professional victimizer since 2019 all the way until his global ban, were freshly reanimated.

I need not apologize for inaccurate information from reliable sources found online regarding the history of a nation. Professor Grabowski knows what I mean; he was famously exonerated by the Warsaw appeals court decision in his own libel case. The 2019 ArbCom ruling in Wikipedia ‘Case/Antisemitism in Poland’ is publically available, and easy to access at the click of a mouse.<sup>62</sup> The ArbCom imposed a year-long topic ban on the user in question, and confirmed his “negative insinuations about Poland” and

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<sup>61</sup> ‘Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Case/World War II and the history of Jews in Poland.’ [Closed](#) 20 May 2023 after 68 days of deliberation.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Case/Antisemitism in Poland.’ [Closed](#) 22 September 2019 after 105 days of deliberation. Case clerks: SQL, Bradv, L235. Drafting arbitrators: AGK, Opabinia regalis. “Remedies.”

“inappropriate ethnically derogatory comments.” Also, the 500/30 restrictions were introduced for all Holocaust-related articles (WP:APLECP) effectively ending his sockpuppet carnival. Soon thereafter, the frivolous accusations of antisemitism were repeated in Haaretz by the same user collaborating under the cover of darkness with Omer Benjakob.<sup>63</sup> Four years later, the false allegations directed at me and others were repeated in the paper by Grabowski & Klein; more less cobbled together from parts of the above mentioned proceedings including the Białystok 1939 photo conspiracy theory.

Errors are made in Wikipedia every minute of every hour. This is what collaborative writing is all about. Research problems are part of the process, prompting the profusion of revisions by multiple users. The articles are in a constant state of flux rendering all, overly detailed, self-assertive analysis redundant. However, as far as conspiracy theories, built around them, anything goes. At the end of 2015, while reading up on the more recent scholarship, I ran into a TVP3 online summary of Prof. Wojciech Śleszyński’s lecture at the Białystok University Library from the series about Podlachia. The following passage caught my attention immediately (translation from the Polish original):

This is one of the most interesting photographs of Białystok from the times of the Soviet occupation. In the background, the Church of St. Roch, and everywhere around: sickles and hammers and five-pointed stars as symbols of the new order ... *It is a happy world; there are joyful citizens here, a pocketful of happiness along with the promise of the new and still better times awaiting. We will not find, in these photos, any war crimes, or any Soviet ongoing deportations to Siberia (Polish: wywózki), because that is how the Soviet propaganda machine worked. In the photos from 1939–1941 Białystok is a city that joyfully welcomes the Soviet army and awaits the new rulers [emphasis added].*<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Richard Tylman, “The Fake Nazi Death Camp Wikipedia’s Longest Hoax’ Conspiracy Theory Invented by a Banned Wikipedian.” [Academia 2019](#), [Wikipedia 2019](#).

<sup>64</sup> Prof. Wojciech Śleszyński, “Białystok w sowieckiej fotografii” [Białystok in Soviet photography], TVP, 16 January 2012. *Original text in Polish*: “To jedna z najciekawszych fotografii Białegostoku z czasów sowieckiej okupacji. W tle kościół Świętego Rocha, a wokół sierpy, młoty, pięcioramiennie gwiazdy – symbole nowego porządku ... *Jest to świat szczęśliwy, są tu radośni obywatele, pełnia szczęścia, obietnica nowych lepszych czasów, i nie znajdziemy w*



Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009

ISBN 978-83-7629-576-3



## The Destruction of the Polish Elite Operation AB – Katyn

The Soviet Occupation 25

### The Soviet Occupation

The Soviet occupation encompassed 52 percent of the area of the pre-war Polish state, with 13 million of Polish citizens. These areas, after unlawful and undemocratic elections to the People's Assemblies of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus of 22 October 1939, were incorporated into the USSR. The Wilno province was temporarily (until June 1940) ceded to Lithuania. Large industrial establishments, trade, banks and forests were nationalized, agricultural reform was carried out by distributing the landed estates formerly belonging to the Church and landed gentry among small and middle-sized peasant holdings. At the same time, any independent self-government, economic, cultural and educational institutions were dissolved. The Polish language was removed from schools and government agencies, and replaced with Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian and Yiddish.

In order to stabilize the systemic change, a campaign against "class-hostile elements" started. Already in September 1939, the troops were followed by special NKVD groups, whose task was to arrest selected political activists, government workers, and Polish Army officers. Only in 1939 more than 19,000 people were arrested.

In February, April and June 1940 and in May–June 1941, four great deportations into the depths of the USSR took place, including military settlers, foresters, the so-called *bezhensty* (refugees from Nazi occupation) and the families of persons deemed to be hostile to communism. According to Soviet estimates, a total of about 325,000 Polish citizens were deported (210,000 Poles, 70,000 Jews, 25,000 Ukrainians, and 20,000 Belarusians).

... The next night I am again investigated. There are two investigators, one from yesterday and a new one. They won't let me sit down, I'm standing 10 hours upright. Drunk with anger, they hail down cries and violent insults on me, they spit again and again in my face, and finally beat my head and neck with a long wooden ruler.



Soviet street propaganda in front of St. Roch Church in Białystok.  
(From Tomasz Wiśniewski's collection, "In Search of Poland" Society)



programy aktualności

ROZMAITOŚCI

### BIAŁYSTOK W SOWIECKIEJ FOTOGRAFII

Publikacja: 16 stycznia 2012, 16:57



fot. arch.

Jak wyglądał Białystok na sowieckich zdjęciach z lat 1939-41 i czy o pierwszych latach okupacji sowieckiej miasta wiemy wszystko? O tym mogli się przekonać wszyscy, którzy przyszli do Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Białymstoku na kolejne spotkanie z cyklu "Podlasie w badaniach naukowych."

To jedna z najciekawszych fotografii Białegostoku z czasów sowieckiej okupacji. W tle kościół Świętego Rocha, a wokół sierpy, młoty, pięcioramienne gwiazdy - symbole nowego porządku. Choć trwa druga wojna światowa - miasto wydaje się ciche i spokojne.

Jak powiedział prof. Wojciech Śleszyński z Instytutu Historii i Nauk Politycznych Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku - Jest to świat szczęśliwy, są tu radosni obywatele, pełnia szczęścia, obietnica nowych lepszych czasów i nie znajdziemy w tych zdjęciach żadnych zbrodni, żadnych wywózek.

Bo tak działała sowiecka machina propagandowa. Na zdjęciach z lat tysiąc dziewięćset trzydzieści dziewięć - czterdzieści jeden Białystok jest miastem, które radośnie wita wojska sowieckie i czeka na nową władzę. Jeszcze do lat dziewięćdziesiątych taki obraz był oficjalną wersją historii. I choć dziś nie ma wątpliwości co do tego, że było inaczej - to właśnie dzięki tym nielicznym fotografiom i filmom naukowcy mogą badać tamte wydarzenia.

- Materiały, którymi dysponujemy są to przede wszystkim materiały partyjne, czyli pochodzące z archiwów partyjnych, niestety do dzisiaj nie mamy jeszcze dostępu do materiałów NKWD, czekamy na dostęp do tych dokumentów - dodaje prof. Śleszyński.

A więcej dokumentów to więcej faktów, dzięki którym lepiej będzie można poznać i zrozumieć historię naszego regionu.

Collage of screenshots from browser tabs (displayed side-by-side): this is the same 1939 photo from Białystok; on the left, from book *The Destruction of the Polish Elite. Operation AB – Katyn* published by the IPN in 2009, with the caption: "Soviet street propaganda in front of St. Roch Church in Białystok from Tomasz Wiśniewski's collection: *In Search of Poland Society*." On the right: the TVP3 Białystok television station homepage from 16 January 2012 with summary of lecture by Prof. Śleszyński: "Białystok w sowieckiej fotografii" [Białystok in Soviet photography] featuring part of an overlaid second image (unknown). No caption.

tych zdjęciach żadnych zbrodni, żadnych wywózek." Bo tak działała sowiecka machina propagandowa. Na zdjęciach z lat tysiąc dziewięćset trzydzieści dziewięć – czterdzieści jeden Białystok jest miastem, które *radośnie wita wojska sowieckie* [emphasis added] i czeka na nową władzę. [Wayback](#).

The photo illustrating the announcement by TVP3 was taken at the library lecture directly, because on top of it (visible in the upper left-hand corner) some other photo was covering the sky. The TVP3 snapshot was further cropped for the TVP3 webpage summary, obfuscating the banner in Yiddish. This version of the 1939 photo was **not** the one uploaded to Commons. The file at Commons does not have a second photo covering part of the original. The first Poeticbent upload was also distorted. The *File history* in Commons, in the *upload summary* below, reveals that the *correction* source used by Poeticbent, published in 2009 by the IPN, was a pdf book available for downloading: “Operation\_AB\_KATYN\_pomniejszona.pdf”: ‘pomniejszona’ means diminished in quality. The caption printed under the 2009 IPN reproduction of the 1939 photo reads in English: “Soviet street propaganda in front of St. Roch Church in Białystok, from Tomasz Wiśniewski’s collection: *In Search of Poland Society*.”<sup>65</sup> Neither the IPN nor the TVP3 provided the actual translation of the street propaganda display unit (FSDU) in Yiddish.

The IPN book *Operation AB – Katyń* on page 29 mentioned, as source, the Tomasz Wiśniewski’s collection ‘Szukamy Polski’. The internet search reveals that in the preceding decade the ‘Szukamy Polski’ Society ran a separate portal called bagnowka.com,<sup>66</sup> featuring the image in question. There was nothing in it about what that photo was meant to illustrate. Poeticbent invoked Karski; unaware, how much deeper the rabbit hole went. A couple of years later another photo was found online showing a different FSDU printed by the Podlaskie Museum, which translated the placard in Yiddish as: “The Election of Delegates for the People’s Council of Western Belarus in the first days of the German occupation of eastern Poland in June and July 1941.” The elections took place under the Soviet occupation on October 22, 1939, not in June and July 1941 under Germany.

<sup>65</sup> IPN, *The Destruction of the Polish Elite. Operation AB – Katyń*, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu IPN, Warsaw 2009, p. 29 of 98 in pdf or 25 in print. ISBN 978-83-7629-576-3, [direct download](#). Internet source: Wayback.

<sup>66</sup> Bagnówka Photo Gallery: “Communism” by *Szukamy Polski* © 2003-2011 [In Search of Poland Society]. Last archived 2012-04-03. [Wayback](#). Image source: Tomek Wisniewski. Bagnówka District of Białystok contains the largest Jewish cemetery in north-eastern Poland.



Wikipedia’s collaborative effort proved beneficial in bringing the case to a successful conclusion, even though it took further correction of errors in captions, and a lot more time to achieve. User Poeticbent has permanently left Wikipedia a year before that.

Erroneous captions under the same Soviet photo appeared not in one, but in several reputable sources from Białystok, including at the official website of the city.<sup>67</sup> Contrary to Grabowski & Klein’s “entrenched stereotype” conspiracy theory, the unintended errors were easier to make than it looks. The last Yiddish speakers left Poland in 1968.<sup>68</sup> Even though Yiddish and Hebrew are written in the same alphabet, they are not mutually intelligible; Yiddish is a lot more closely related to German. Likewise, in their written forms Yiddish and Hebrew are not mutually understandable.

## The tenor of judgment

Some of the readers might ask why, even the most notorious edit-warriors weren’t named anywhere in this essay. Based on the information known to me, the unacknowledged dataset’s creator for the paper by Grabowski & Klein could easily be operating under one hundred different aliases in Wikipedia over the course of years. He was in the habit of not only conversing with himself as different users, casting illegal votes under multiple accounts and fiercely defending his own edits as somebody other than himself, but in extreme cases also created fresh new authors for each touch-up in the same entries, and boasted about “single-handedly” battling a cabal of deep state actors whom he believed, imbibed anti-Semitism with maternal lactation. He is a man who lost his self; a ghost master, spitballing about battlegrounds he created out of his own neurosis, and justifying his harassment campaigns with patriotic trolling. I had left Wikipedia in 2018 when I

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<sup>67</sup> The official website of the city of Białystok, 16 January 2012, “Jak wyglądał Białystok w sowieckiej fotografii propagandowej?” [*What did Białystok look like in Soviet propaganda photography?*] illustrated with the photo in question with the caption: *The Soviet occupation of Białystok. The first days of October 1939* [“Sowiecka okupacja Białegostoku. Pierwsze dni października 1939 roku”]. [Wayback](#).

<sup>68</sup> Mikołaj Gliški, 2015, “How Much Polish Is There in Yiddish [and vice versa]?” *Culture.pl* [Wayback](#)

realized that there's no solution, because he was endorsed by administration.

The above behavioural pattern was by no means unique. According to philosopher Larry Sanger, Wikipedia was being overrun with internet trolls from the very onset of its existence.<sup>69</sup> Sanger wrote that among volunteers he encountered, many were 'mentally unhinged' or 'literally' insane, bleeding at the typewriter in an attempt to write themselves out of their disorders with hypomanic fervor. Readers of Wikipedia entries cannot know who wrote the articles they read due to the decentralized nature of anonymity, but they can choose to actively engage in the process of checking the reliability and validity of research. In other words, they can bask in the glory of their own ignorance (which most of them do) or otherwise accept the notion that in the social sciences, Wikipedia attracts convinced believers and ideological warriors as much as demonic souls trapped in their inner torment.

After the 1935 death of Poland's benevolent leader Marshal Józef Piłsudski, which coincided with Hitler's rise to power in a series of electoral victories, Poland's internal politics took a dramatic turn for the worse. The peak of antisemitism was marked by the efforts to impose quotas in Polish universities from 1935 on. The tragic fate which has befallen Poland's Jewish community during the Holocaust was also a tragedy for what became of Poland in the wake of World War II. The scholarly debates about the nature of the Polish, Jewish, German, Russian and Ukrainian relations before, during and after the Holocaust continue to this day. With the fall of communism, a new generation of historians revitalized the field of political history on behalf of the newly formed Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) in the 1990s. The findings of the Polish scholars in the field of Holocaust studies provide opportunities to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the victims and survivors of mass atrocities on all sides of this conflict.

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<sup>69</sup> Zach Schwartz, "Wikipedia's Co-Founder Is Wikipedia's Most Outspoken Critic", 2015 *Vice Media*. [Wayback](#).

In 2010, the Russian State Duma officially accepted the Soviet responsibility for the mass killing of 22,000 Polish and Polish-Jewish military officers, religious figures, and intelligentsia in the Katyn Forest outside Smolensk in 1940. However, in a shocking reversal of events – following Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine – the symbolic admission of guilt for the Katyn massacre, 80 years after the fact, was taken back by the Russian Foreign Ministry, and again, attributed to Nazi Germany.<sup>70</sup> History is never history. As far as the verdicts and moral indignation exhibited by Grabowski & Klein, the warning from Herbert Butterfield is even more relevant here.

It has been said that the historian is the avenger, and that standing as a judge between the parties and rivalries and causes of bygone generations he can lift up the fallen and beat down the proud, and by his exposures and his verdicts, his satire and his moral indignation, can punish unrighteousness, avenge the injured or reward the innocent. One may be forgiven for not being too happy about any division of mankind into good and evil, progressive and reactionary, black and white; and it is not clear that moral indignation is not a dispersion of one’s energies to the great confusion of one’s judgement.<sup>71</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>70</sup> Javier G. Cuesta, "Russia rewrites the history of 22,000 Poles murdered by Soviet forces during World War II." EL PAÍS USA Edition, 28 April 2023. [Wayback](#).

<sup>71</sup> Herbert Butterfield (1900-1979). Cited by 2721 – “The Whig Interpretation of History” (1931), 82 pages. Preface. 1. Introduction. 2. The Underlying Assumption. [Wayback](#).